

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 ACDA-05 OMB-01 IO-10 CIAE-00

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS: FINAL DAYS OF CAMPAIGN

REF: LISBON 2300

1. THE OFFICIAL ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN PERIOD IS DRAWING TO A CLOSE:
ALL PROPAGANDA AND POLITICAL MEETINGS BY LAW MUST CEASE 48 HOURS
BEFORE THE POLLS OPEN APRIL 25. LAST WEEKEND WITNESSED THE
CAMPAIGN FINALES OF MOST OF THE PARTIES, WITH GOOD WEATHER
ENCOURAGING LARGE TURNOUTS IN LISBON FOR VARIOUS OUTDOOR RALLIES.
BY FAR THE MOST IMPRESSIVE WAS THE SOCIALIST (PS) WINDUP IN
LISBON'S HUGE MAY FIRST STADIUM.

2. ONLY THE COMMUNISTS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO FILL THE MAY FIRST
STADIUM PREVIOUSLY. EXCELLENT SOCIALIST ORGANIZATIONAL WORK AND
ADVANCE PREPARATION DURING THE WEEKEND RESULTED IN A MASSIVE
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SOCIALIST TURNOUT FOR THE RALLY. AN EMBOFF ON THE SCENE REPORTS

100,000 FROM ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY SHOWED UP FOR THE ALL-DAY AFFAIR, COMPLETELY FILLING THE STADIUM. THE MAIN THEME OF THE SPEECHES BY PS LEADERS WAS A DENUNCIATION OF DICTATORSHIP AND A RESTATEMENT OF SOCIALIST SUPPORT FOR THE AFM. BEFORE AND AFTER THE RALLY, MARIO SOARES AND JUSTICE MINISTER SALGADO ZENHA CRISSCROSSED LISBON SHAKING HANDS AND KISSING BABIES AMERICAN-STYLE, DRAWING ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE FROM BYSTANDERS. THE SOCIALISTS WERE COUNTING ON AN IMPRESSIVE TURNOUT JUST BEFORE THE ELECTIONS TO CREATE A BANDWAGON EFFECT, RESULTING IN A LARGE SOCIALIST VOTE NEXT FRIDAY.

3. SCHOOLS CLOSE FOR ELECTION DAY:

THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECREED THE CLOSING OF ALL LISBON EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES FOR THE DAY BEFORE (AND AFTER) THE ELECTIONS. THIS MEASURE IS DESIGNED TO ALLOW ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES SUFFICIENT TIME TO SET UP VOTING BOOTHS AND PREPARE FOR ELECTION DAY.

3. LITTLE VIOLENCE DURING CAMPAIGN:

EXCEPT FOR THE RECENT VIOLENCE DIRECTED AGAINST THE CDS (REFTEL), THE THREE WEEK OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN -- APRIL 2-23 -- HAS NOT BEEN MARRED BY SIGNIFICANT VIOLENCE. SPORADIC FAR LEFT HARRASSMENT OF THE PPD HAS OCCURRED, BUT LEFTIST EXTREMISTS HAVE GENERALLY REFRAINED FROM A MASSIVE CAMPAIGN AGAINST MODERATE FORCES. THOSE INCIDENTS THAT DID OCCUR SEEM TO BE THE RESULT OF LOSS OF PATIENCE AND TEMPER BY PPD ACTIVISTS WHEN PROVOKED.

DESPITE THE RELATIVE CALM WHICH HAS PREVAILED SO FAR, THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT MAOISTS PLAN TO DISRUPT THE ELECTIONS APRIL 25. SIGNS AUTHORED BY THE MRPP AND OTHER EXTREMIST GROUPS APPEARED IN OPORTO FOR THE FIRST TIME APRIL 20 CALLING FOR LARGE ANTIELECTORAL DEMONSTRATIONS. EXTREMISTS WILL BE HINDERED IN POSSIBLE HARRASSMENT EFFORT ELECTION DAY BY THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISPERSION OF VOTERS INTO SOME 14,000 SEPARATE VOTING PLACES, NONE OF WHICH WILL SERVE MORE THAN 500 REGISTERED VOTERS.

4. MODERATE PARTIES STILL CONSIDER ELECTIONS IMPORTANT:

EMBOFFS CONTACTED LEADERS OF THE PPD AND CDS LAST WEEK TO ASCERTAIN THEIR OPINION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ELECTIONS, NOW THAT THE SIGNING OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLATFORM OF UNDERSTANDING HAS TEKAN AWAY MUCH OF THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE ELECTIONS. LEADERS CONTINUE TO DECLARE THAT THEIR PARTIES CONSIDER THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ELECTIONS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. THEY POINT OUT THAT THEY NEVER MENTIONED IN THEIR ELECTORAL PROPAGANDA THEIR PREFERENCES REGARDING THE NEW CONSTITUTION, INSTEAD THEY CONCENTRATED ON CONVINCING THE ELECTORATE THAT THEIR IDEOLOGICAL APPROACH AND THEIR PARTICULAR LEADERS COULD BEST RESOLVE THE NATION'S PROBLEMS. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES IN THESE PARTIES, THE ELECTORATE ON THE WHOLE EXPRESSED LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN THE NEW CONSTITUTION OR IN BROAD CONCEPTS, INSTEAD FOCUSING ON LOCAL ISSUES OF IMMEDIATE

INTEREST TO THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS COMMUNITY. THE PPD AND THE CDS
CLAIM THAT THE PEOPLE KNOW WHAT THEY WANT REGARDLESS OF AFM PRO-
TESTATIONS THAT FASCISM HAS LEFT THEM POLITICALLY IGNORANT.
THEY BELIEVE A LARGE VOTE FOR THEIR PARTIES CANNOT HELP BUT
INCREASE THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE AFM AND REINFORCE THE AFM.
ALTHOUGH THEY MAY BE WHISTLING IN THE DARK, THE PPD AND CDS DO
NOT BELIEVE THAT ALL IS LOST OR THAT MODERATES ARE FINISHED;
HENCE THEY PLACE GREAT STORE IN A MODERATE VICTORY AS A WAY TO
PIT POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY AGAINST THE REVOLUTIONARY -- AND UNTESTED
-- SOVEREIGNTY WHICH THE AFM HAS USED TO JUSTIFY ITS ACTIONS
TO DATE.
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